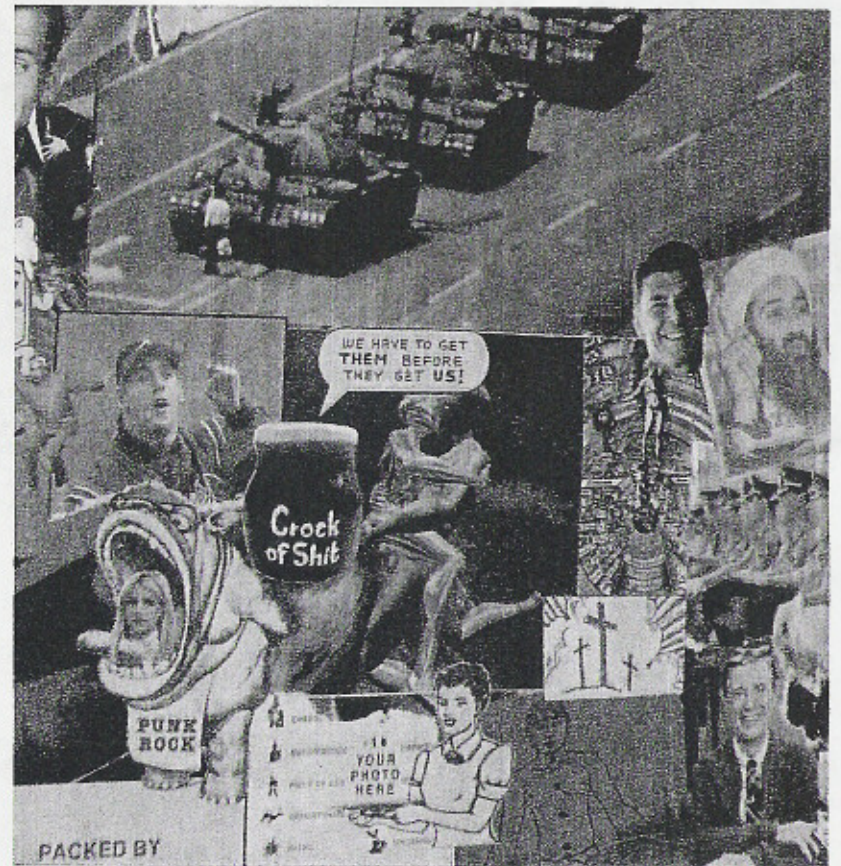


“Give me space to make choices that reflect who I am.”

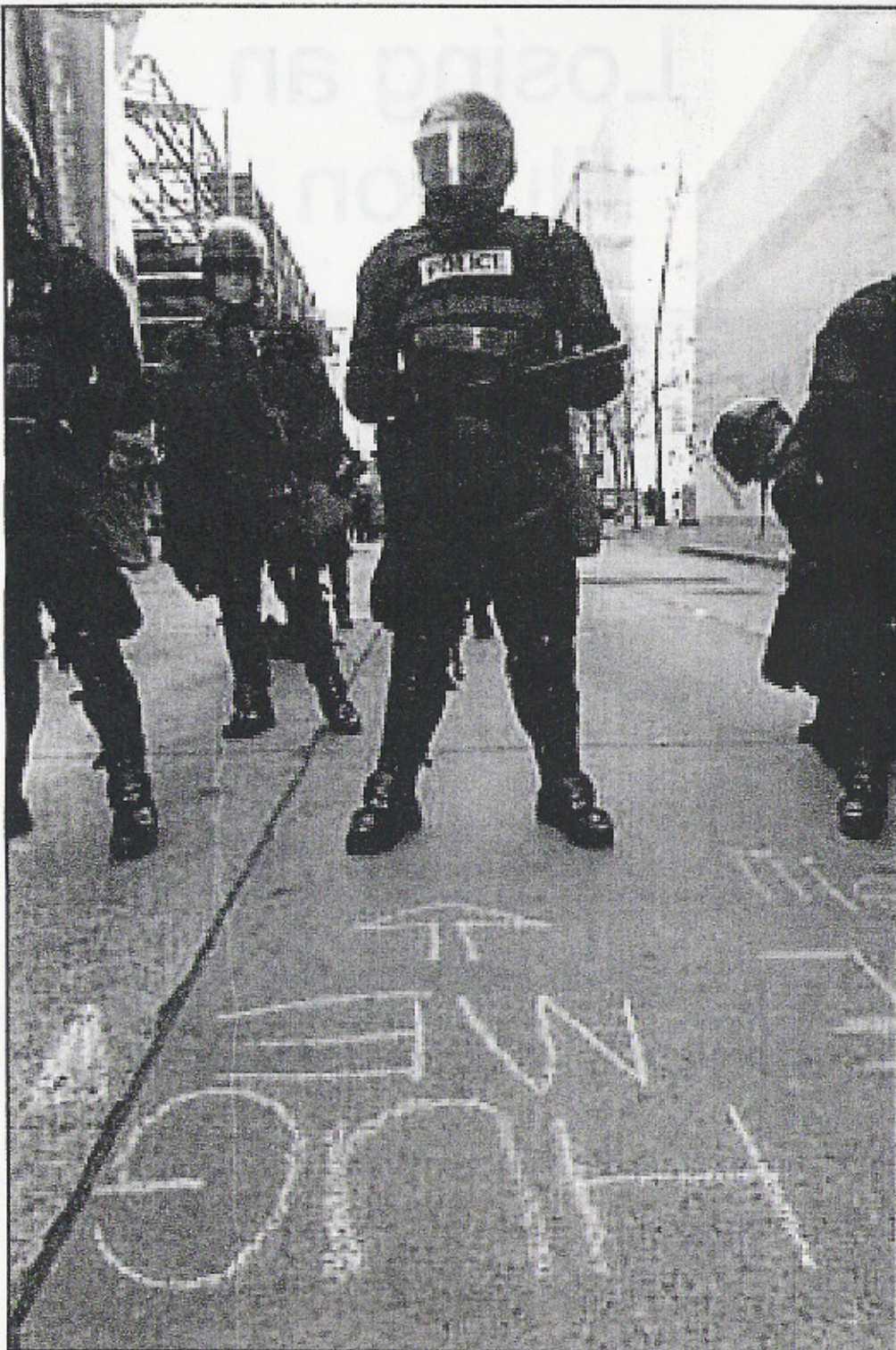
—painted on a bus stop in Ballard.



a collection of essays on society and politics

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Honey



Bunny

A POEM

We're dieing in the cities
We're dieing in the streets
We're dieing in the supermarkets
Eating hormone injected meats

We die everyday at the shopping malls
A piece of our bodies fallen away
Taught to doubt our bodies and our minds
We can change at least our thoughts today

Going to work, digging our own graves
We reproduce our lives everyday
The fracture between our desire and our reality grows
But we can change reality today

We are alive in our bodies
We are alive within our minds
We are alive when we confront this civilization that binds
So let us live our lives

As the leaves of alienation fall from the withering tree of the metropolis we are reborn. It wasn't built in a day and it will take time for it to fade. Rain clouds come. The sun will rise. Whatever is born will one day die. My freedom is dependent on yours. My freedom is dependent on the trees, the animals, the rocks, the mountains, the rivers, and the seas. My freedom will no longer be just a thought, it will be an action. My freedom is not within the pages of a book, a zine, graffiti on a wall, or a movie screen. Freedom will come to this planet in over six billion ways. Freedom will come to the trees, the animals, the rocks, the mountains, the rivers, and the seas. Freedom will come to you and me. Freedom will come. Freedom peaks through on a lazy Sunday morning or when we play hooky from work. Freedom is seen as the kids skip class and do what they do. Freedom can be whenever the status-quo is challenged, whenever we follow our instinct whenever we wake up from our routines and actually live. Freedom happens when we choose not to limit the freedom of others or ourselves.

Starfish

The tides were unusually high last night. Waves crashed onto the sandy shore. In the morning when they had receded yellowish foam marked their high point. Beachwood lay strewn about decorated by deep green seaweed churned up from the ocean floor. There was something else the waves left behind; something that could not be seen from the nearby highway. Helplessly tossed onto the beach during the night hundreds of dying starfish now lay exposed to the hot sun—their moist bodies quickly becoming dehydrated and starved for the life giving waters of the sea that had left them to die. And they would surely die before the tides returned to take them back home.

A young boy walking on the beach noticed the starfish and, feeling a sense of great compassion, began to throw them back into the water one at a time. An older man saw the boy. The man had witnessed the after effects of many storms and he had seen many withered and still starfish. As he approached he said cynically, "What are you doing?"

"Saving the starfish," the young boy answered.

fearful to examine their own lives much less call into question any of the dominate culture's fundamental beliefs.

Capitalism and civilization are finite. Dogmas and ideologies are inherently restrictive. Morality (and it's justification of the totality of un-freedom) is an extension of these. Any opposition to them will require the continual questioning of all that is and all that could be.

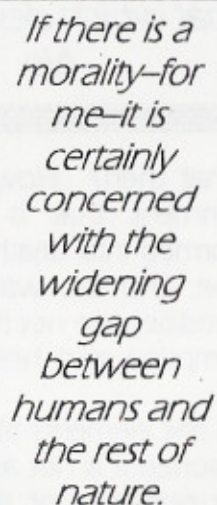
That being said, I have no answers. I continually struggle with these issues and paradoxes of reason and morality. Quite possibly any attempt to logically justify a position that is completely at odds with the dominators version is doomed to failure simply because most, if not all, of the methods used for communication and explanation have been developed and refined under conditions of domination of the many at the hands of the few. However, one thing I no longer struggle with is the dire necessity to stop the sturnble to slaughter that is western civilization and its justification of the totality of its morality.

you? If it is authoritarian to stop someone from ruining your life, or for that matter your meal, then being un-authoritarian is utopian and forever unattainable (and for me undesirable).

Some will say this is the same justification those who perpetuate the status-quo use to continue their domination. After all if someone shuts down a factory that you own—effectively shutting on the means to your meal—are you not justified in preventing this from happening? Again, I say no and here's why. The ever tightening

noose of civilization has increasingly enclosed the commons to the point of an almost all-encompassing totality of interconnected structures (both material and psychological) that serve to justify the taking of these commons by a small minority to their exclusive benefit. These purported benefits include items such as cars, homes, and property of all sorts. The accumulation of such surplus allows the few to subjugate the many. The

justification of this is never more evident than in the circular logic of morality and religion. Only such ideologies could justify death in the name of life. It is this morality that almost all of us learn from birth—through our nuclear families, schools, and jobs. It is this morality that is so difficult for us to jettison because to do so would call into question an entire way of thinking and being (an entire culture), peeling away lies to reveal the core. Many are too ashamed or



*If there is a
morality—for
me—it is
certainly
concerned
with the
widening
gap
between
humans and
the rest of
nature.*

"But there must be thousands of them," said the man as he scratched his long scruffy grey beard, "What difference can you make?"

"I don't know," said the boy as he continued to throw starfish back into the cool water one by one.

The man grumbled, "You can't save 'em all."

"No", said the boy as he picked up a starfish, "but I can save this one."

Then he gently tossed the lucky starfish back into the life giving waters. The man smiled and walked slowly away laughing to himself and quietly cursing the seas under his breath; the boy continued to throw one starfish at a time back into the ocean. Soon he realized the futility of his efforts but he remained determined and grasped as many starfish as his small arms could hold. Scooping up ten or eleven at a time he quickly grew tired and collapsed. He felt exhausted and defeated. He walked home. His head hung low.

The boy in this story could be seen as idealist and altruistic, the man possibly cold hearted or simply realistic. But what if the old man knew something the young boy did not? What if the man knew that the ocean was poisoned? What if the sea was killing the starfish just as surely as the exposure to the hot afternoon sun? Then, far from saving the creatures, the boy was prolonging their suffering and failing to address the underlining cause of their misery and impending death.

I believe this story is a metaphor. The water is globalization or global capitalism (in short our current economic reality), the starfish are all the disenfranchised, marginalized, and trampled upon (in short most of the people on this planet), the boy represents all the well meaning people and organizations that wish to rescue these people. And the older man . . . I don't know, perhaps you, perhaps me, maybe he represents anyone with a critical mind and the courage to question the unquestionable. Content enough in the comforts of his own world, he seems to lack the conviction to do much about the plight of either the boy or the starfish. Better yet, the water is civilization and the boy represents government, the U.N., organized religion (whatever constrains autonomy)—meaning that the starfish are each one of us, as well as all the trees and animals that all live on this planet. Searching for an escape from premature death we find ourselves continually up against these barriers. We briefly escape the poised sea only to be tossed back in by forces we fail to understand. And even if we succeed in this escape we know little of life outside these pseudo-supports. Socialized to see authority as necessary and even desirable we have collectively lost the knowledge to live beyond them and wind up dieing on the beach.

The approach often taken by the Left when the problems of the world start to become overwhelming is far too uncritical. Like the boy in the story, their motivations may be pure yet their means are

Furthermore, I have the ability to make choices in my life. Such choices may have undesirable consequences, nevertheless, they exist. If I desire a life without wage labor I can quit my job. If I desire a drink of water I can drink. Yet, this is where a purely non-coercive line of thinking breaks down. For example, if I desire to breathe clean air and drink clean water and I live by a chemical factory that releases toxins into the air I breathe and the water I drink

*Is it wrong to destroy
that which destroys us?
No.*

my desires are left unfulfilled. If my request to the factory for clean air and water is rejected and subsequent appeals

fail what then? How long do I wait around while the environment that is supposed to give life is being transformed into death? The land we walk on, the air we breathe, and the water within and around us are not commodities, are not there for our stewardship or exclusive consumption, and their purity should not be negotiable.

When the elements that give and sustain life are restricted or poisoned it is not authoritative (but may be coercive) to relieve ourselves of the mechanisms or individuals that allow such a situation to exist; rather it is well within an anti-authoritarian vision to join with the rest of the life-forms on this planet in their resistance to these mechanisms. In short, if someone is shitting on your meal and you stop them because you do not want to eat shit are you judging them? I say no. Are you coercing them? Perhaps, yet are there not universals in life, universal rights such as the right to eat, drink, and breathe uncontaminated food, water, and air? How about the right to live without someone shitting on

when perpetrated by the hands of the state under the guise of its many justifications. Many are repulsed at the vile products that modern society produces and are perplexed as to the motivation and mindset of the individuals that carry out such acts in seeming contradiction to dominant mores. Yet increasingly such acts are, when society is viewed critically, completely in line with the images (or spectacle?) and morals (or pseudo-morals?) of an increasingly violent and contradictory culture. In short, most criticize the products of this destructive culture while at no point pausing to consider the fundamental destructive aspects of the culture itself.

On the rare occasion the critical approach is pursued it all too often takes the form of religious high ground or moral absolute truth that, while occasionally targeting the correct *effects*, stops short of attacking the true foundational *causes* of that which they despise; causes including the attempted domination over nature, authoritative relationships, symbolic interaction, civilization, and civilized (domesticated) life. In this vein the chosen solutions take on the form of more rules, more reification, and more guilt, in short more of the same.

This brings me back to the question of how to reject behavior and actions without judgment. In other words; if I have a vision of a better world and the conviction to accomplish it how do I keep from becoming a close minded, dogmatic, fascist, in theory and practice? The best answer I can offer is simple—to *live by example*.

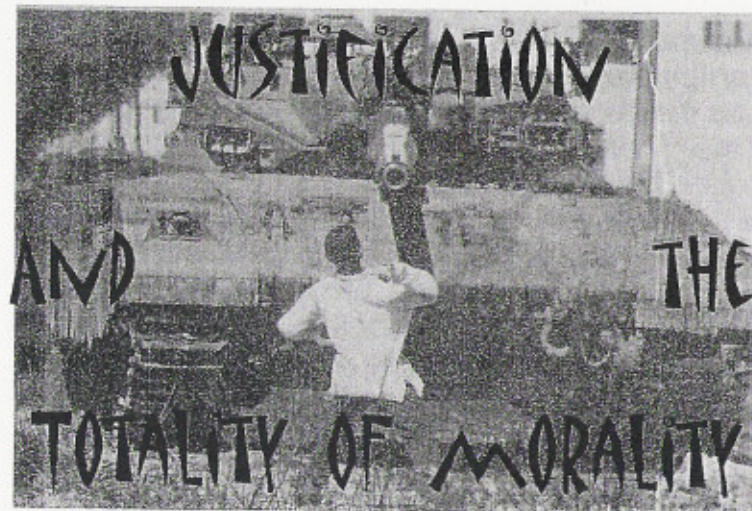
To be un-authoritative you cannot coerce, deceive, or compel others to accept your way of thinking or doing. This reality is lost on many—nonetheless it is a reality.

misdirected at best. It is problematic to place bandages on capitalism's inequalities because you run into contradictions and paradoxes unless you do away with the entire system. This realization is overwhelming to be sure, as confronting the totality of injustice and unfreedom is exponentially more difficult than addressing individual issues as if in a vacuum. However, simplistic, narrow targets for change (like merely throwing the starfish back into the waters to their painfully drawn-out deaths) make it easier for the state to pacify protest movements and contention by granting concessions that do not fundamentally challenge existing social relationships. Therefore, while it is undeniable that some individuals' lives can be made better by implementing this or that state sponsored welfare scheme (or redistribution) or the latest progressive/socialist bureaucratic hierarchy's idea of the same; the fact remains that until the causes of the symptoms become the focus they will continue to be throwing starfish back into poisoned waters.

When the receding tide of globalization leaves people dying on the beach is it in their best interest to throw them back into the very water that left them to die in the first place? No. The point is not, "Don't try and save the starfish!", but rather, "*How can we truly save ourselves and those around us from this death train?*" Would it not be beneficial to facilitate and empower ourselves and others toward cleansing the muddy, poisoned waters of our current state of affairs?

Working toward alleviating hunger, pain, and inequity within the current global system of capital not only gives fuel to this machine—enabling it to further expand and exploit with greater and greater efficiency—it also delays its inescapable downfall. Therefore, strategies that are unorthodox and beyond traditional frameworks are the only means of bringing about radical social change. *For those that truly desire freedom and justice the "politics as usual" of liberals, leftists, progressives, and socialists must be jettisoned at once.* How long will these poisoned waters be ignored? How long will the roots of our bondage and alienation remain unchallenged? Roots that run to the core of our understanding and learned reality must be challenged just as deeply.

One thing is for sure, injustice, coercion, and genocide will continue so long as the mechanisms that promote them are allowed to function with impunity. Our chains are all around us manifest in the built environment and ideologies that serve only as our anti-life. If freedom is what we desire then freedom is what we will dig up from the ashes of the fallen economies, governments, prisons, and metropolises which entomb only broken lives and dying starfish.



We live in a world of interconnected subjugation, alienation, and oppression which produces all manner of inequity—including those that do harm to others in society's own image. No sooner can one condemn the individual who is the manifestation of this society than they so too must condemn the society as a whole.

But why condemn anyone or anything? Is condemn the right word? Refuse or reject may be more appropriate. I DO NOT WANT TO LIVE IN A WORLD OF WAR AND DOMINATION! Do you? How then do we reject what we dislike without passing judgment—moral or otherwise? Furthermore, is this even possible?

It is the definition of hypocrisy to stand and stare in astonishment and moral condemnation at mass murderers, child molesters, and rapists (all in my opinion horrid and undesirable) while all the while condoning the same acts

suppressed by the society, but the illusion of equality and freedom is implanted within the very institutions that curtail the development of such ideals. **Every time someone votes they reinforce this system of pseudo-freedom.**

It should be clear enough by now that legislating a revolution is absolutely impossible. Within the political realm such change would need to be implemented by the very individuals such a system serves...not likely.

Yet there is another approach, one that unequivocally rejects the culture of domination in all its forms; an unapologetic and uncompromising call to tangible, **real action**; a plan that involves **direct action** against the tools and agents of oppression, shunning representatives and surrogates in favor of the individual as their own emancipator. This will manifest in many different ways. This is the strength of individuality and peculiarity that we are diverse and everywhere, leaderless yet focused.



I can no longer live at the pace of television. If one wishes to reject; consumer culture, the "neon pleasure dome", dominate ideology, fascism that is presented as democracy, and all of the interconnected chains that limit freedom, then the disconnecting of the wire, the cable, that is attached to the majority of American homes is the starting point. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to immerse yourself in the world of television without being affected by its message (militarism, patriarchy, authoritarianism, a mediated-surrogate-symbolic life). Far too many live under the illusion that programming and advertisements do not affect them negatively. Oh what a terrible mistake. The easiest targets for a predator are those who are unaware they are prey. If television did not influence all who watch, it would not be the trillion dollar industry that it is. Unsuspecting victims buy Chevy's, Coke, Viagra (or the latest drug), Mickey D's, and consumerism in general with little or no thought as to the environmental and social consequences of their actions.

Entertainment programming is increasingly inundated by cross promotion and product placement. Larger

corporations have interests in many integrated media conglomerates (General Electric owns NBC, Westinghouse owns CBS, Disney owns ABC, ESPN, et cetera). Similar patterns exist in radio and print media. The result being that with such collusion what is being sold is not only a product or program but a way of seeing the world, a way of seeing the world that perpetuates systems and ideas that keep those who are in control of the media in control of the media, a system that keeps those who are in control of public life in control of public life.

Some find refuge in the "objectivity" of the evening news or some television news magazine where the line between entertainment and news is increasingly blurred.

*We offer up our
bodies and our
minds at the altars
of production and
consumption—in
return we receive
shovels to dig our
own graves.*

News broadcasts are selling ideology, not only the ideology of consumption but, more alarmingly, that of fascist militarism. Everyday viewers of the evening news are indoctrinated to accept increasingly inhumane and unjust treatment of anyone deemed a threat to the status-quo, democracy,

or progress. Between the propaganda news programs and the latest sit-com drivel viewers are taught what their needs are; they are taught that without such and such a product they are not good enough, they are taught that

the status quo are limited by the very framework imposed by the society onto its citizens. In other words, those in power will allow descent, protest, and demonstrations only at the points which present no real challenge to the system that perpetuates their power. Even the New Deal—the shining example often used by the Left to illustrate what can be accomplished within the system—actually suppressed meaningful qualitative change concerning the modes and relations of production and, in fact, helped to save capitalism in this country. F.D. Roosevelt with the help of union leaders assimilated the working class

into the Democratic Party and, in doing so, effectively suppressed the fundamental goals of the movement. Yet even these goals failed to call into question the seemingly pious role of work, production, and consumption. This is a perfect example of how advanced industrial society "has surpassed its ideology by translating it into the reality of its political institutions." (Marcuse) Within our society even theories concerning radical change are limited by this dynamic thereby restricting discourse and praxis. This constitutes a double false consciousness. Not only are true freedoms

REPUBLICAN
=
DEMOCRAT

Participating in electoral representative democracy equates to choosing ones master. Yet simply not voting does not equate to being master-less; this only occurs once we are no longer ruled and no longer rule over. Abstaining from elections is a means to an end, not the means to an end.

It is clear that legislating change through or within the very systems that the legislation hopes to do away with is akin to bashing your head against a brick wall. Can you pass a law against capitalist exploitation? Can you really vote for fair trade? Can you vote for peace or against empire? **Cast**



whatever ballot you like, the fundamental choices have already been made for you. Pretending that the U.S. is a democracy is extremely counter-productive. The Left is clearly ideologically bankrupt; its theory and praxis are continually failing to liberate anyone. Years of voting for Democrats, Socialists, or liberals has

brought about nothing but the reinforcement of the status quo (to say nothing of the horror that is Marxism in practice). Within the technologically advanced industrial society discussions about social change, the needs of society and the individual, and the power structure that legitimizes

unless the U.S. military bombs a third world country they will not be safe.

The viewer becomes an accomplice—paying taxes, working, stumbling along. Rather than using our resources to affirm life by decreasing suffering and pain we buy practically useless SUVs, DVDs, PDAs, and whatever other so called necessity of life is being pimped at the moment. Never mind that all over the world people's basic needs are not being met. The commodity culture presents a picture of abundance, a wide variety of choices, happiness, satisfaction, and the end of suffering. In reality it is this very culture that limits the realization of this abundance for the majority of people living on the planet. Television allows the user to see only those whom they wish to see—or rather those in control of the media allow the illusion of choice and “full coverage” within this limited framework. This creates obvious problems not the least of which is a *disconnection from reality* and eventually a *disconnection from humanity*. Television, radio, newspaper—we cannot condemn any one of these tentacles without calling into question the entire mass communication system. This interconnected system cannot be reformed and will always serve those who wish to control others.

We all have a choice within our lives of privilege; will we disconnect from one another, or will we disconnect from the television? The former will lead to more of the same and eventually worse. The latter can be the beginning of a path that leads to emotional sustainability, compassion, and love. I can no longer live at the pace of television. Can you?

Yet all of these words prove nothing. Just writing words on paper does not make them true. Don't take my words for it, experience it for yourself. Next time you go to turn on the television pause first; take a few deep breaths, allow yourself to experience your emotions and feelings. Then turn on the T.V. and become absorbed for a few minutes then ask yourself, "What has now changed? What need is being met?" *Quickly turn off the T.V.* Are there more constructive, less alienating ways to meet these needs? The passive one way communication of television can be replaced by countless other activities that bring us closer to one another and the world around us. We can only experience these with the T.V. off and our minds open.

Like weaning off of any physical or psychological addiction, eliminating television from the average American's life will create a void. Quite possibly this is the best reason yet to do so, for it is this void that the powers that be want to disguise, it is this void that they are afraid of. This is the void that can be filled with life-affirming knowledge and unmediated experiences of a life without television. We must acknowledge our emptiness if we wish to be filled.

THOUGHTS ON THE ILLEGITIMACY OF REPRESENTATION

When we vote we place our hopes and dreams into the hands of another. We give someone else the autonomy that we once had. By entrusting another to do what is best for us we deny not only our own individuality and peculiarity but also that of others. It becomes easier for zealots to see that their chosen representative is not only "good" for them but "good" for everyone; this—as history has shown—can easily lead to despotism. Furthermore, to project onto one person (or party) the hope that they alone can change things for the better or spark a revolution is extremely problematic. One governor, one senator, one president can no more fundamentally change, let alone topple, the system of injustice than any one of us can. Just as it has taken civilization many, many generations to get to this point it will take many more to undo it all. It will take people acting autonomously and free from the restraints of leaders and representatives; a better world is possible if we collectively reject all authority.